

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**HON. JANE HARMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 21, 2001*

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, during Women's History Month, I would like to highlight one of the cruelest and most widespread forms of violence: violence against women. In 1999, there were over 59,000 domestic violence calls for assistance in Los Angeles County—755 in my district alone. And those are just the women who call.

I am taking this opportunity to mention two shelters located in my district. Rainbow Services, a shelter in San Pedro, California, was the first shelter to establish an emergency response program in Los Angeles County for battered women and children. Rainbow Services provides resources and guidance that help battered women end abuse. Women at the shelter are given help obtaining a restraining order and there is a large network of almost 20 weekly peer support groups. As important, all services are offered in Spanish, allowing access for more women to seek help.

A second shelter, the 1736 Family Crisis Center in Hermosa Beach, also offers unique and important help. The Center aids women and children who need to use emergency services by allowing them to stay one month with confidential shelter. Second Step Shelters also provide transitional abuse counseling and offer independent living skills training, which allows women to become self-sufficient after their time at the shelter.

Mr. Speaker, violence against women is still an epidemic in this country. It is my hope this important issue continues to receive government attention. Shelters, like those in my district, must receive the necessary resources so all women in need have access to a safe and confidential home. We cannot ignore this issue, or sweep it under the rug. Only constant vigilance and providing women with tools and knowledge will be successful in ending the cycle of domestic violence.

CELEBRATING GREEK  
INDEPENDENCE DAY

SPEECH OF

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 20, 2001*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, 180 years ago the Greek people rose against the Ottoman Empire to free themselves from oppression and to reestablish not only a free and independent state, but a country that would eventually regain her ancient status as a democracy. In congratulating the people of Greece on the anniversary of their revolution, I join in recognizing the distinction earned by Greece as the birthplace of democracy and her special relationship with the United States in our fight together against Nazism, communism and other aggression in the last century alone. Yes, democrats around the world should recognize and celebrate this day together with Greece to reaffirm our common democratic heritage.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, while the ancient Greeks forged the notion of democracy, and many

Greeks of the last century fought to regain democracy, careful analyses of the political and basic human freedoms climate in today's Greece paint a sobering picture of how fundamental and precious freedoms are treated.

Taking a look at the issues which have been raised in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Review Meetings and will be considered over the next week at the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), a few of the most critical human dimension concerns about contemporary Greece affect the freedom of expression, the freedom of religious belief and practice, and protection from discrimination.

Legal restrictions on free speech remain on the books, and those convicted have typically been allowed to pay a fine instead of going to jail. In recent years, though, Greek journalists and others have been imprisoned based on statements made in the press. This was noted in the most recent Country Report on Human Rights Practices prepared by the Department of State. The International Press Institute has also criticized the frequent criminal charges against journalists in cases of libel and defamation.

Religious freedom for everyone living in Greece is not guaranteed by the Greek Constitution and is violated by other laws which are often used against adherents of minority or non-traditional faiths. Especially onerous are the provisions of Greek law which prohibit the freedom of religious

These statutes have a chilling impact on religious liberty in the Hellenic Republic and are inconsistent with numerous OSCE commitments which, among other things, commit Greece to take effective measures to prevent and eliminate religious discrimination against individuals or communities; allow religious organizations to prepare and distribute religious materials; ensure the right to freedom of expression and the right to change one's religion or belief and freedom to manifest one's religion or belief. Over the last ten years, the European Court of Human Rights has issued more than a dozen judgments against Greece for violating Article 9 (pertaining to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

One positive development was the decision made last summer to remove from the state-issued national identity cards the notation of one's religious affiliation. In May 2000, Minister of Justice Professor Mihalīs Stathopoulos publicly recognized that this practice violated Greece's own Law on the Protection of Personal Data passed in 1997. The decision followed a binding ruling made by the relevant Independent Authority which asked the state to remove religion as well as other personal data (fingerprints, citizenship, spouse's name, and profession) from the identity cards. This has long been a pending human rights concern and an issue raised in a hearing on religious freedom held by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (which I Co-Chair) in September 1996.

I am pleased to note that Greece has acknowledged in its most recent report to the UN CERD that the problems faced by the Roma community (which has been a part of Greek society for more than 400 years), migrant workers and refugees are "at the core of the concern of the authorities." The recognition

that issues which need attention is always the first step necessary to addressing the problem. The Commission has received many reports regarding the Roma community in Greece, including disturbing accounts of pervasive discrimination in employment, housing, education, and access to social services, including health care. With a very high illiteracy rate, this segment of Greek society is particularly vulnerable to abuse by local officials, including reports of Roma being denied registration for voting or identity cards that in turn prevents them from gaining access to government-provided services. Particularly alarming are incidents such as the forced eviction of an estimated 100 families by order of the mayor of Ano Liossia and the bulldozing of their makeshift housing in July of 2000. Similar incidents have occurred in recent years in Agia Paraskevi, Kriti, Trikala, Nea Koi, and Evosmos.

Our Founding Fathers relied heavily on the political and philosophical experience of the ancient Greeks, and Thomas Jefferson even called ancient Greece "the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness." As an ally and a fellow participating State of the OSCE, we have the right and obligation to encourage implementation of the commitments our respective governments have made with full consensus. I have appreciated very much and applaud the willingness of the Government of Greece to maintain a dialogue on human dimension matters within the OSCE. We must continue our striving together to ensure that all citizens enjoy their fundamental human rights and freedoms without distinction.

RAILROAD RETIREMENT AND SURVIVORS  
IMPROVEMENT ACT OF  
2001**HON. NICK J. RAHALL II**

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, March 21, 2001*

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in introducing the "Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001" today.

In the Third District of West Virginia, we have 8,300 citizens who will benefit from this bill, which ranks southern West Virginia seventh in the United States.

The bill we are introducing today will double benefits for widows of railroad retirees, reduce the retirement age from 62 to 60 years of age with 30 years of service, and allow a person to be vested in the system after five years of service, rather than 10 years, as currently required.

No taxpayers' dollars will be used to finance these railroad retirement benefits, which are paid by employer and employee taxes.

This bill includes the exact provisions of H.R. 4844, which I helped to write last year, and which passed the House by an overwhelming vote of 391-25 on September 7, 2000. However, the Senate did not act on the bill.

The bill is a product of two years of negotiation between management of the railroad industry and railroad workers. As last year's